

An Update on Georgia's Office of Health Improvement's HIV/AIDS TAKE Project: Communities of Practice (CoP)

The HIV/AIDS TAKE (*Take Action, Keep Educated*) Project is a part of the Department of Community Health's Office of Health Improvement. The project is housed in the Office of Minority Health. Because of a grant award, the Office of Minority Health will be creating a Community of Practice (CoP), which will bring together public and private organizations to collaborate on ways to improve the continuum of care for HIV/AIDS.

The Communities of Practice will include intergovernmental agencies from state, county, and local levels; Hispanic/Latino organizations and community-based organizations.

Intergovernmental CoP Meeting, November 17, 2006

The HIV/AIDS TAKE Project conducted a three-hour statewide intergovernmental video conference with 57 participants from across the state. Participating agencies identified the scope of services from their organizations and the barriers that are encountered in the continuum of care for HIV/AIDS.

Some of the comments made during the meeting were as follows:

Discussing the barriers:

- ❖ **Gainesville**-*there is one Ryan White Clinic for a 13 county area; no transportation- patients travel two hours for clinical services.*
- ❖ **Augusta**-*don't know who to contact regarding the various agencies to better service clients; it is a challenge to get people in rural counties interested in HIV testing.*
- ❖ **Savannah**-*substance abuse is so prevalent; the HIV testing and care are secondary.*
- ❖ **Fulton**-*the key contact book needs to be broader in scope; we need a website and lists serve attachment.*
- ❖ **Columbus**- *the state needs to bring people together to address the HIV issue; need resource base and best practices discussions.*

Hispanic/Latino CoP, November 28, 2006

The HIV/AIDS TAKE Project conducted a two-hour statewide Hispanic/Latino teleconference. Twenty-five people representing Hispanic/Latino service organizations and state government participated in the meeting.

The initial question asked of participants and some of the comments made in addressing the issues and challenges faced in the continuum of care for HIV/AIDS among Hispanic/Latino populations are as follows:

What assets or resources do you, or your organizations have that can support the work you do in the HIV arena?

- ❖ **Behavioral health services** *began providing services to adult males for drugs and alcohol problems. Now we serve males who have unprotected sex with multiple partners. As services grew, we began seeing drug usage along with HIV positive clients. We partnered with AID Gwinnett, AID Atlanta and Fulton to refer for testing. We need to help them learn how to manage the emotional impact of being positive.*

- ❖ **Positive Impact**, a mental health organization, providing psychiatric services. Low resources and transportation challenges. SAMSHA grant loss will impact ability to serve clients. At this time, 65 clients with no referral source. Need to connect with others to create a team and a network. Government needs to provide assistance and support.
- ❖ **Rural Georgia**-no HIV funding, Pfizer grant ending. Peer training program that is very effective. We see more STDs following changes in funding. Made efforts to move to the H2A camps that bring in people to do work in US. In these camps, people are afraid of immigration issues. People are falling into serious situations and we don't have an easy referral system in Georgia, especially in rural Georgia. The migrant community is constantly changing. Can't afford to provide services and many are ineligible for assistance. Emergency Medicaid applications are being denied.

Next Steps

Intergovernmental CoP

- ❖ Develop strategic plans to address barriers and need for collaboration with government workgroups. Convene at least four meetings.
- ❖ Increase collaboration and shared information by developing a database of resources that will be made available on the HIV/AIDS TAKE Project's dedicated website at www.HIV-AIDSTAKEPROJECT.org
- ❖ Improve state-level responsiveness.
- ❖ Plan for the three-month follow-up meeting.
- ❖ Develop a detailed summary report of the meetings proceedings.

Hispanic/Latino CoP

- ❖ Identify gaps in service.
- ❖ Improve state level responsiveness.
- ❖ Convene a statewide meeting of group members and coalitions.
- ❖ Plan for the three-month follow-up meeting.
- ❖ Design database as was indicated in the ICoP.
- ❖ Develop a detailed summary report of the meetings proceedings.

The HIV/AIDS TAKE Project plans to meet face to face with the statewide community organizations and faith-based community in January or February, 2007, to develop the third tier of the CoP.

The website HIV-AIDSTAKEProject.org will be an important tool in developing the statewide Community of Practice, sharing of information and resources and maintaining cohesiveness among the intergovernmental CoP, Hispanic/Latino CoP and the community organizations in Georgia.